

REMARKS

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the allowance of claims 1-5, 7, and 9-15. Additionally, claim 8 has been cancelled without prejudice.

The drawings were objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a) for not showing every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Applicants previously amended claims 5, 10, 11, and 12, thereby making it clear that the optical fibers are optically interconnected. Applicants would like to remind the Primary Examiner of the proposed drawings submitted in the Reply dated May 14, 2003 showing the optical connection between optical fibers a copy of which is attached hereto, which illustrates the claimed subject matter. Moreover, Office Action Summary stated that the drawings filed on March 14, 2003 were accepted. See Paragraph 10 of the Office Action Summary dated May 12, 2004. Applicants will submit formal drawings in due course. Thus, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

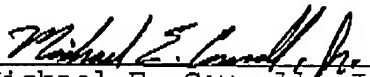
Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. sec. 103(a) applying U.S. Pat. No. 5,930,431 ('431) in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,550,985 ('985). Claim 8 has been cancelled without prejudice. For at least these reasons, withdrawal of the sec. 103(a) rejection of claim 8 is warranted and is respectfully requested.

No fees are believed due in connection with this Reply. If any fees are due in connection with this Reply, please charge any fees, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number 19-2167.

Allowance of all pending claims is believed to be warranted and is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is welcomed to telephone the undersigned to discuss the merits of this patent application.

Respectfully submitted,


Michael E. Carroll, Jr.
Attorney
Reg. No. 46,602
P.O. Box 489
Hickory, N. C. 28603
Telephone: 828/901-6725

Date: 8/12/04